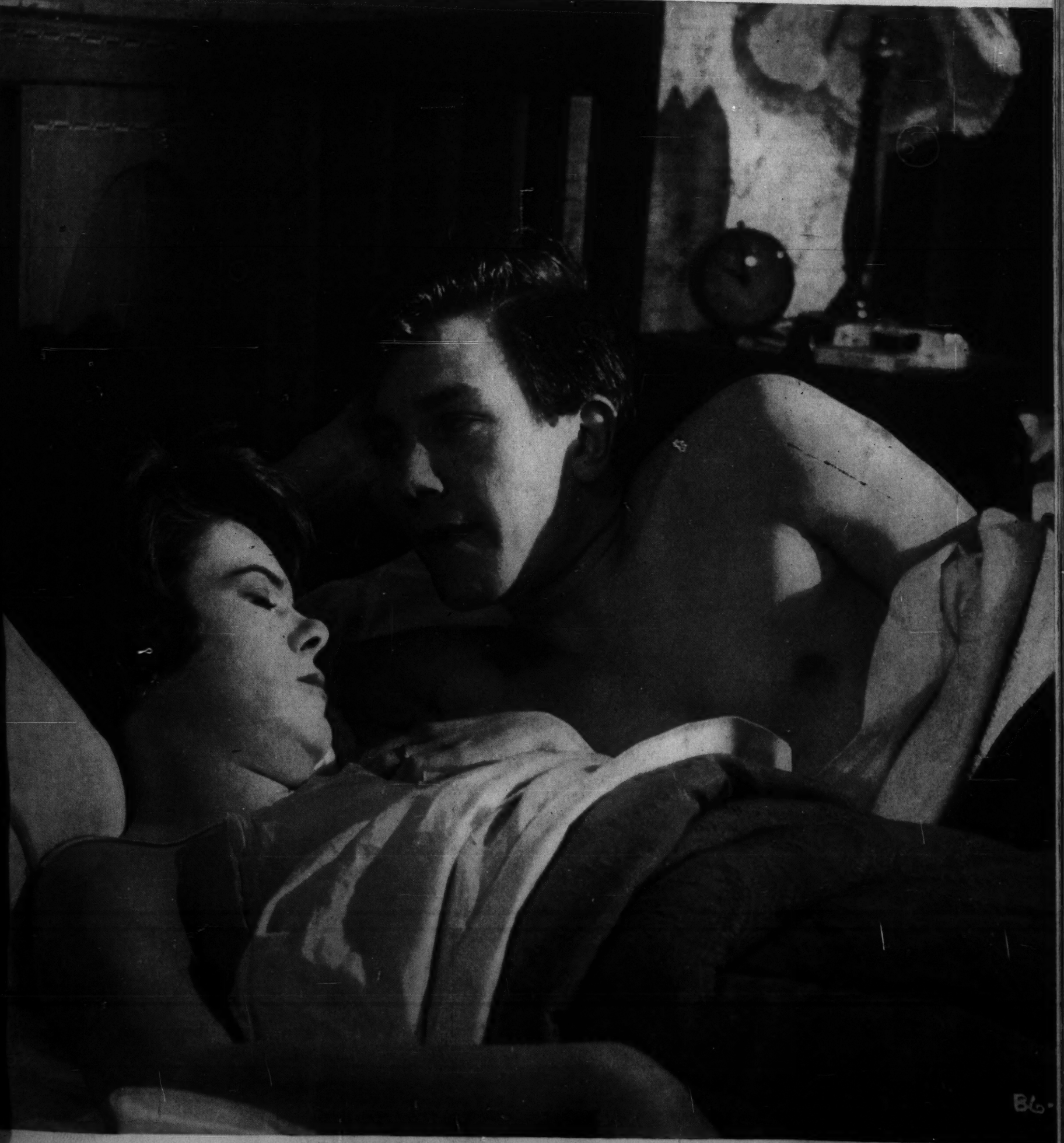


DEFINITION

BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE
INFORMATION DEPARTMENT

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF FILM CRITICISM



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EDITORIAL

The career of "The Entertainer" is sadly revealing. The film was completed many months ago and was due for a London première in May. Without explanation, its press show and première were suddenly postponed and the film did not appear until late July.

Various reasons were given for the film's non-appearance. The most common was that the film had technical faults which had to be corrected. There seems to have been some truth in this; certainly, the sound on one reel was redubbed. But the circumstances surrounding the film's non-appearance do not suggest this was the real reason for the postponement. You do not usually find a film has technical faults *after* you have fixed a press show and première.

The sudden postponement and the behind-the-scenes rumours hint that the usual things have been happening. The distributors suddenly got cold feet, thinking that the film wouldn't make money. Alterations were suggested, arguments developed.

Of course, a great number of British films do not make money; a reasonable percentage of them could never have hoped to make money. Yet they are released without any trouble. *The Entertainer* was a special case because it was a clear challenge to the well established system of the British Film Industry. It had an unconventional story which needed an audience prepared to work in order to enjoy the film. It had only one star, Laurence Olivier, (and he has never meant much at the box office); several of the leading parts were played by young unknowns from the stage. Its makers have been very critical of the assumptions and methods of the British industry.

All of this meant that the industry was very disinclined to take any risks with the film. Tony Richardson and John Osborne did not belong in

the cosy system. Why help them? Indeed, if "The Entertainer" were not released. Richardson and Osborne's chances of making another film would be very small indeed.

These were not the film's only troubles. The censor insisted on giving it an 'X' certificate, so immediately cutting its potential profits, even though much nastier films like "Doctor in Love" and "Expresso Bongo" were given 'A' certificates. And when it was publically shown, it appeared in one of the worst of London's West End cinemas, the Odeon, Marble Arch, a cinema which is too far from the centre of the West End to get really big audiences.

The sad thing is that, judged by only the strictest commercial standards, a film industry needs a regular supply of bold and exciting films like "The Entertainer". Any industry which wants to develop must create opportunities for experiment, where new ideas and techniques can be tried out, new directors, writers, cameramen, actors and actresses get their chance. One of the reasons for Hollywood's continued success is that it has always been willing to create these opportunities.

It would be too much to expect the present British industry to do the same. There are too many men without vision, courage, or taste, too many yes-men, cowards and nonentities, too many crooks after quick profits, controlling the British industry for this to happen.

It would be absurd for a magazine like this to imagine that it can have much effect on such an entrenched system. The most we can do is to encourage and welcome anybody who shows some courage, some initiative, some dissatisfaction with the worn-out formulas. Because "The Entertainer" shows all this and more we give it a right, royal welcome.

THE BEST WE'VE GOT

Alan Lovell

Although the last issue of "Sequence" appeared in 1952, its attitude to the cinema continued to be expressed in "Sight and Sound". Most of "Sequence's" contributors became "Sight and Sound's" contributors and one of them, Gavin Lambert became editor. "Sight and Sound" got a face lift. For some years it was able to communicate some of the same enthusiasm that "Sequence" had for the cinema.

By 1957/8, the "Sequence" impulse was dead. Gavin Lambert had gone to America and the other important "Sequence" contributors were mainly concerned with making films. Yet "Sight and Sound" has continued to retain the prestige it gained from the "Sequence" face lift, although by now it has become a very different magazine. An enthusiasm for the cinema has become very muffled in the "Sight and Sound" of the past few years — so muffled as to be non-existent. The vitality of "Sequence" has changed into the complacency of the established magazine.

The present quality of "Sight and Sound" is very apparent if you look at the feature articles it has published over the last few years. Nearly all of them are compilation articles. A number of directors or a number of films are thrown together and made the subject of a general article. The examples I have in mind are Peter John Dyer's articles on "Youth and the Cinema", John Gillet's on veteran Hollywood directors "The Survivors", and the article on the Italian cinema "The year of *La Dolce Vita*".

There is nothing wrong with compilation articles as such. They can be a particularly useful way of providing information. Some of "Sight and Sound's" better articles like Louis Marcorelles on the Hungarian cinema, David Robinson on British documentary, or Lindsay Anderson on the Japanese cinema have been articles of this kind.

But they can easily become a method of evading the need to make any critical judgements. By choosing to cover a large number of films or directors, you can spend most of the article giving general information about them. Peter John Dyer's articles on "Youth and the Cinema" were no more than a string of descriptions of films about young people, occasionally mixed with a sociological generalisation of this kind:—"Whether one likes it or not, the movement from sometimes utterly dissimilar causes towards the effect of a stereotyped global culture pattern has become an inescapable fact."

The article on the current Italian cinema is the kind of article that could be written about any cinema, at any time, by anybody. The technique is to take a number of young directors and then say: "So and so showed he could handle actors in his last two films but was handicapped by weak scripts. If he gets the kind of script he needs he may well become one of our leading directors in the future... so and so, on the other hand, has had some good scripts and shows a nice sense of the cinema but has not been helped by the stars he has had to accept. If he gets better actors in the future he too may well turn out to be one of the most promising of our younger talents."

Apart from the quality of the articles, the choice of subject is always very obvious in "Sight and Sound". Most of the articles are surveys of national cinemas—otherwise they reflect current social clichés like 'youth and the cinema', or current cinema clichés like 'New French Young Directors'. The general result of this kind of editorial policy is that "Sight and Sound" is able to avoid making value judgements about the contemporary cinema, and merely reflects what is happening without enthusiasm or insight.

Its treatment of recent developments in the British and French cinema is a good example of this lack of enthusiasm and evasion of judgement. There have been two big pieces on the French cinema, one an article by George Sadoul called "Notes on a new generation", and the other a group of articles on *Hiroshima, mon amour*. Sadoul's article was a series of biographical sketches of all the French directors who have started making feature films recently. No distinctions were made between them and they were all treated as if they were of equal worth. The pieces on *Hiroshima, mon amour* included a description of Resnais' career, an article by the film's editor, and an interview with Marguerite Duras, its scriptwriter. Yet nowhere in "Sight and Sound" has there been any kind of critical consideration of the film.

The new British films have had two main articles devoted to them, one by Penelope Houston (*Room at the Top*) and one by David Robinson (*Look back in Anger*). Two thirds of Penelope Houston's article is not about the film, but consists of obvious generalisations about the 'angry young man' movement and the future of the British cinema. And the judgements of the film are of this kind: "The film flickers off and on like an electric torch, but when it's shining it has intensity enough." David Robinson at least spent the whole of his article trying to assess the quality of *Look Back in Anger*. But his enthusiasm was so exaggerated that one could hardly take his assessment seriously, and he was not helped by the decision to print a shot by shot sequence of the film. The sequence was a perfectly ordinary one. More important, the only other film that has got this treatment from "Sight and Sound" recently was *Tokyo Story*. To try to compare the two films makes criticism into some kind of a joke.

"Sight and Sound's" reviews have much the same quality as the articles. There is the same tendency to avoid making judgements or to make them in such a cautious way that they are meaningless. It is not at all clear on what principle films are selected for review. Why for instance give a long review to a typical Hollywood product like *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and, in the same issue, only a short review to *The Man Upstairs*—one of the more enterprising of British productions—particularly when it was produced by the Association of British Cinema Technicians, whose production company could do a good deal to improve British films? And why has Jack Gold's remarkable film *The Visit* been totally ignored? It hasn't had any kind of distribution yet, but one of the ways it might get distribution is through magazines like "Sight and Sound" taking some notice of it.

Apart from the things I have already complained of, "Sight and Sound's" whole approach to the cinema is made very unreal because of its lack of any serious concern with the economics of the industry. It is not that economics have been ignored, but that every article about the economics of the industry, except one, has dealt with the industry from its own viewpoint. The present set-up is accepted, and only minor criticisms are made of it. The one exception was an article by Walter Lassally in a recent issue of the magazine in which he showed how an enterprising second feature was almost killed by the distributors. The British industry is ripe for a very serious economic examination. It is inefficient and unsuccessful, yet the returns on distribution investments and the salaries paid throughout the industry are fantastically large. One of the most important functions of any serious film magazine should be to expose this corrupt and hypocritical system.

Of course, one can see why

"Sight and Sound" might prefer not to go too carefully into the economics of the industry. Although it is in theory independent of the British Film Institute, its publishers, it is very closely connected with the Institute. The Institute is to a great extent dependent on the industry, and the industry is notoriously very sensitive to criticism.

Even if the British situation is difficult to handle, there is no excuse for ignoring the economic systems of foreign industries. In the last few years very exciting experiments in the control and organisation of the film industry have been tried in Poland. Artists have been given very great freedom and they have produced very interesting work. Yet all this has been ignored by "Sight and Sound". Or to take another example close to "Sight and Sound's" heart. Ingmar Bergman has now made over thirty films. The majority of them, right up until *Smiles of a Summer Night* and *The Seventh Seal*, were commercial and critical failures. Yet Bergman was allowed to go on making films very much as he liked. What kind of industry was prepared to carry out such a far sighted policy?

Perhaps the best clue to "Sight and Sound's" attitude was given by the editor of the magazine when she wrote recently: "The interest is already in a cinema less sweeping, closer to the novel in the intensity of its preoccupations, the amount of meaning it can isolate in one limited area of experience. Essentially, the problems are those of the individual confronting himself: not concerned with social conditions, nor with issues demanding big decisions, but with the complicated business of living. The artist, whether it is Alain Resnais in *Hiroshima, mon amour*, reviving memories of lost time, or Bergman in *Wild Strawberries* looking for the point at which an old man lost his way, or Chabrol in *Le Beau Serge* work-

ing out his parable of redemption, is turning inward rather than outward."

Apart from the incomprehensibility of some of this (what does 'closer to the novel in the intensity of its preoccupations' mean? Does *La Terra Trema* lack intensity because it is a social film) one can clearly see a fashionable mind at work. The directors quoted as examples are currently fashionable. (Even then it is a little difficult to see how *Hiroshima, mon amour* could be quoted as an example of a film that is not concerned with 'issues demanding big decisions').

More important is the way that social conditions and issues demanding big decisions are separated from 'the complicated business of living'. This is the true voice of the complacent British liberal, one of the few people who can pretend to ignore the complications of living that are caused by big issues and social conditions. Certainly Kurosawa in *Living*, Satyajit Ray in his *Pather Panchali* trilogy, John Cassavetes in *Shadows*, and François Truffaut in *Les quatre cents coups* do not ignore these facts. If there is a general trend in the cinema at present it is surely away from separating out films into 'private' films and 'social' films.

At the present time in cinema criticism, the people who seem closest to us are often our greatest enemies. We know what the Jympton Harman's, the C. A. Lejeune's, the Leonard Moseley's, and the Derek Monsey's are like, the damage they do. But they have the system on their side. If we are to defeat them and all they stand for, our only weapon is our own enthusiasm, how much we care about the cinema, what we think it is capable of. It is because "Sight and Sound" from its unique position weakens that enthusiasm and makes the cinema smaller and less exciting than it should be that it needs severe criticism.

POLAND'S OTHER ANDRZEJ

There are signs that in the West the interest in Polish Cinema, so keen not long ago, is now dying out. The reasons, or at least some of them, are fairly obvious: the smart audiences of specialized cinemas are governed by fashion, and each new fashion renders the previous one out of date. We've got the "Nouvelle Vague" with us now.

But there are also, I believe, political factors at work. We are used to seeing every new development on the other side of the "Iron Curtain," be it a social, scientific or cultural one, as primarily a political phenomenon. The "discovery" of the

Polish Cinema came after the so-called "Polish October", coinciding with a great wave of politically inspired interest in everything that went on in Poland. Perhaps a Warsaw film-critic, who said that the Cannes Festival prize, awarded to Wajda for his *Kanal* was really intended for Gomulka, was at least partly right. But that was Spring, 1957. In 1960 Poland politically is rather a dull country and cannot be expected to provide excitement in the near future. In all probability Gomulka will never recover his popularity with festival juries.

It could of course be argued that a serious interest in art, especially cinematic art, cannot be "pure", and that Polish films are political in content anyway; it is also true that most artistic movements finally become sterile and mannered and interest in them naturally dwindles. Some critics believe that this is what has happened to the Polish Cinema. Somebody—it was suggested to us—should write an article on "The Rise and Fall of the Polish Cinema."

Perhaps there is some justification for this view, even if it is rather sweeping and superficial. Admit-



tedly, a certain period of the Polish Cinema is now over. It would be futile to expect another *Ashes and Diamonds*, still less *A Generation*. Yet how can one talk about "the fall of the Polish Cinema", when five years earlier this cinema hardly existed? Now there is a foundation of a reasonably efficient and developing industry, a wise, progressive distribution system, plus a group of young film makers who have already proved their worth, and a new wave of highly promising talents from the Lodz Film School, awaiting their chance (and even more important—a national tradition has now been established). The political pressures are, perhaps, on the increase, but one doubts whether they will ever become as crippling to the ambitious film-maker as the commercial pressures in the West. It is too soon to write an epitaph for the Polish Cinema.

The truth is that this cinema has entered a difficult period of transition and adjustment. The stimulus, which in the years 1956-57 every artist could find in the almost revolutionary state of the country, is no longer available, and this change must affect the film-maker directly. The Polish Cinema is no longer a movement. Yet the real talents—all of them young—should survive, and in fact crystallise and develop along their individual paths.

It seems to me that the recent origin of this national cinema, the special circumstances surrounding its birth and the nature of the economic system within which it grows should ensure our keen interest in its present problems. The trouble is that we lack a true perspective from which to observe and judge. One realizes with a sense of shock how limited, in spite of all the ballyhoo, is our knowledge of the Polish Cinema. London has seen so far only Wajda's trilogy, a few single films by other directors and a couple of experimental shorts. The position is even worse with respect to serious criticism. Looking through the old copies of *Sight and Sound* one finds a few reviews, (*Kanal*, *Ashes and Diamonds*, *Last Day of a Summer*), one purely informative article and some production notes from Warsaw. Even Wajda still waits for a serious

evaluation. One compares this with the amount of critical attention the Japanese Cinema received in the years following its "discovery" in the West, when we had separate articles on several directors and a responsible discussion of their films. I'm not trying to suggest that the Polish Cinema is as rich; but it is closer to us, and inspired by a kind of situation which can serve as a metaphor for our own predicament.

The extent of our ignorance can be judged by the fact that Munk is regarded in his own country as a major director, on a par with Wajda, while over here he is just a name, vaguely remembered, but not really identifiable with anything at all. It is true that his *Eroica* was shown some time ago in Edinburgh and *Man on the Tracks* had a screening at the National Film Theatre in 1958, but neither film raised a comment.

I met Munk in Vienna last year and again this year in London. In between these meetings I have seen some of his work. Our conversations were highly disorganized, and I could not possibly present them in a form of a conventional, orderly interview, but perhaps they can serve as an excuse for writing about an interesting, serious, little known and little understood director.

Munk, like Wajda, is a graduate of the Lodz film school. Unlike Wajda, though, he had undergone a thorough apprenticeship in documentary before directing his first feature. I have seen only one of his early documentary films, a short called *A Sunday Morning*, remarkable only for its total lack of any serious artistic ambition. A morning tram drive through the Polish capital is competently enough handled and has a certain feeling for the Warsaw streets and people, but it is difficult to relate it in any way to Munk's later output. I have seen neither of Munk's feature length documentaries: *The Stars Must Shine* (which he co-directed with Lesiewicz) and *Men of the Blue Cross*, Poland's 1955 entry for the Venice festival, both apparently interesting, if uneven, films. It wasn't until 1956 that he started on his first feature, *The Man on the Track*, though even this, having as its

central character an engine driver and being concerned with his work, would probably be described as "a semi-documentary drama" in western jargon.

The date of Munk's feature debut is significant. The political thaw was approaching its zenith; the Party apparatus was disintegrating fast. It was a period of intense intellectual activity, with young writers and journalists assuming moral leadership in the nation. This revolutionary ferment made it possible for Munk to tackle directly those themes which he was to develop in his later films. In fact Munk "found himself" with his first feature. If it had been written a year earlier, it would not have been made.

Making a debut under those conditions had its drawbacks also. Events were moving fast; each weekly issue of *Po Prostu* took the examination of the system's defects a stage further. When Munk first started his film in spring 1956, the project must have seemed quite politically daring. It would still have been effective if it had been shown immediately after completion in late summer. But it was held up for two months and released a few weeks after the "Polish October" and Gomulka's rise to power and with the Hungarian insurrection already in progress. The film's political daring must have seemed faded by then, and the audiences were probably in no mood to appreciate its other than political qualities. Thus the *Man on the Track* attracted no great interest in Poland, though it was entered for the Marianskie Lazne festival and won for Munk a prize for direction.

The Man on the Track was included in a short season of Polish films at the National Film Theatre in spring 1957. Munk was a new name then and one saw the film as a political document rather than a work of art. It seemed competently done, well observed and infused with a sense of urgency, but not getting very deep below the surface of things. Coming back to it three years later, and with a knowledge of *Eroica*, I found *The Man on the Track* a much more personal, richer work than it had seemed at the time.

A man is run over by a fast night train and it transpires that the accident prevented the train from being derailed. The authorities treat it as a case of sabotage, with the dead man, an old engine driver dismissed from service, as main suspect. An inquest is held and witnesses tell in flashback of their association with the driver and events leading to the accident. It is finally established that the man in fact died trying to save the train, not to wreck it.

This narrative method, building a composite image from several relative view-points, used first by Orson Welles for his *Citizen Kane*, is now of course an accepted cinematic convention, no longer exciting in itself. But I doubt whether it was ever more appropriate, or applied with greater success. *Citizen Kane*, for all its adventurous techniques, never rose above journalistic level in characterisation. In fact, Welles' tricky and aggressive style recalls certain kinds of journalism. In *The Man on the Track*, Munk's sober and concise narrative never distracts attention from the central

conflict and each new point of view really opens up another dimension. First we get the official attitude, represented here by a station master, a "new" man. Orzechowski, the dead engine driver, was for him a reactionary, a harmful person, trying to retard changes, sabotaging the economy drive. For a youngster, who was put on Orzechowski's engine to watch over things and eventually succeed him, the old man may have still been a reactionary, but the conflict between them developed on a personal level. He could perceive and respect the strength of Orzechowski's loyalties and had glimpsed a troubled human being beneath a proud, uncompromising exterior. Finally we have an account by another railwayman who has met Orzechowski—by then a broken down and sick old man—on the day of the accident. (The film's weakest episode, this.)

Munk's engine driver must rank with the screen's finest portrayals of working men (not that the competition is so fierce!). It's quite remarkable when one considers that the character is observed entirely from outside, that we learn hardly

anything of his private life. It is a sympathetic portrayal, yet free of any sentimentality, and in this lies its great strength. There is no nostalgia for the old world, no self-pity. There is compassion for a man—a product of the previous epoch—unable to effect a transition and adjust himself to the new order. The film is also an attack on the confident official stupidity, on the authorities, unable to see the situation in human terms. In this respect, as a direct indictment of the workings of Stalinist system, *The Man on the Track* is quite unique. Nothing to compare with this has been done in the feature field before or since, in Poland or in any other of "People's Democracies".

In comparison with its qualities, the film's weaknesses are really quite marginal. Not all the performances are well controlled and integrated, and several scenes seem rather naive: but this is, one feels, a result of a technical rather than an intellectual immaturity. This is confirmed by Munk's next film, *Eroica*, where his control becomes complete.



Eroica, released in January 1958, is a major work. Many Polish critics believe it to be the finest Polish film to date; others find it a joke in a bad taste, or even deliberate blasphemy. The film was conceived as a "heroic symphony" in three parts, but after completion Munk found one of the parts unsatisfactory and left it out. Strangely enough, this did not seem to affect the unity of the whole film though perhaps the musical parallel is no longer apt.

The first part of *Eroica*, titled "Scherzo alla Polacca's" has as its central character, a completely amoral person, Dzidzius, a wide boy, deserting the 1944 Warsaw Rising, and then finding himself performing heroic deeds of almost-historic importance. Running away to his cosy home outside Warsaw, the hero, or rather the anti-hero, finds Hungarian troops stationed there and his young wife having an affair with a handsome lieutenant. The lieutenant, perhaps to get the husband out of his way, tells him that the Hungarians, all two divisions of them, are ready to help the Warsaw insurgents, subject to certain provisions. Dzidzius accepts the mission and twice goes there and back, finally arriving home drunk just as the troops are breaking camp and moving away. The film takes some time to set the scene and establish the characters, but later gathers momentum and explodes in a brilliantly funny final sequence of a drunken hero's progress through the enemy lines.

The second part, "Ostinato Lugubre", takes us to a P.O.W. camp in Germany, and a different set of characters. The Warsaw Rising has failed and some of the officers captured are billeted with the prisoners of the 1939 campaign. The camp is extremely well guarded; in all its history only one successful escape has been recorded: that of lieutenant Zawistowski. This event assumes almost mythical proportions and becomes a main source of officers' morale. One of the new arrivals soon stumbles on a mystery: Zawistowski has not in fact succeeded in escaping and is being kept by his accomplices in a tight little dark attic. Among the officers there is one, lieutenant Zak, once

Zawistowski's intimate friend, who reacts badly to the tensions of camp life and hates his fellow-prisoners' protective hypocrisy. One day in a gesture of anger and defiance, he runs out into the courtyard and is shot dead by the guards. Zawistowski watches the incident and for him, weakened and ill as he is, this proves to be the last straw. He commits suicide. But the myth mustn't die. The German commander—evidently subscribing to the same officers' code—helps the conspirators to smuggle Zawistowski's body out of the camp in a metal barrel.

Somebody remarked to me once how he admired the way Munk softens up his audience in *Eroica's* first part, and then, having got their defences down, delivers a knock-out blow in the second. No doubt the contrast helps the effectiveness of the second part by throwing it into sharper relief, but in fact it is the first episode which is more aggressive, more immediately and potently satirical. With a change in mood Munk takes up his theme at a different level and develops it now without any comic deformations. The second story is understated, told with great economy and a deceptive simplicity. "Scherzo alla Polacca" serves as a kind of satirical introduction; "Ostinato Lugubre" is a complete, considered, rounded statement.

Eroica again grew up, in a way, out of the Polish October. In October 1956 the nation, perhaps for the first time in its history, acted in a crisis with both courage and self-discipline, achieving its objectives without bloodshed. Munk saw in it the birth of a new conception of heroism, going against the old tradition of romantic, individual and often irresponsible heroism which until now formed one of the main themes of Polish art. *Eroica* was designed to feed this new conception of patriotism and to kill the old and harmful myth. It seems to me that as a destroyer of myths Munk did extremely well. His purely intellectual approach, which in a different case might be a serious limitation, is here his great strength. For all the weight of criticism there is not a trace of personal bitterness in either

The Man on the Track or *Eroica*. Munk never confuses his human sympathies with loyalties, and his loyalties are clear. Thanks to that there is a certain finality in the way Munk takes the heroic myth apart. One almost feels that after this it should never recover again.

It is instructive to imagine how different *Eroica's* second part would have been, both in visual style and attitude, had it been handled by Wajda. Wajda creates myths even as he destroys them; with Munk this danger is never present.

It is difficult to estimate the influence of a film like *Eroica*. It was certainly not a spectacular box-office success, but it did pay its way. It outraged many people—a proof of its effectiveness—but in the Polish cinema it had no immediate successor, except perhaps Munk's own new film, *Crosseyed Luck*.

Munk is an easy person to talk to: direct, friendly and modest without ever falling into hypocrisy. In general conversation he seems a little vague, until one hits on something that interests him. Then he brightens up, concentrates, talks enthusiastically and very much to the point. About films, he has definite likes and dislikes and—like many creative artists—can be biased, impatient and unfair. (He could not bear to sit through several 'free cinema' films, but he greatly admires *We Are the Lambeth Boys*.) He sees very clearly what he is trying to achieve himself.

Munk is a classicist. He constructs his films carefully and deliberately, tries to control his material down to the smallest detail. He dislikes ostentatious technique and is prepared to go to extraordinary lengths to avoid what he considers purely mechanical effects. It is not the function of art—he says—to shock people with mechanical devices. Nowadays he even feels guilty about some effects he used himself in *Man on the Track* and *Eroica*: contrasting silences with a crescendo of sound and music. This attitude leads him to distrust conventional montage methods. He cuts only when it is absolutely logical and necessary and gladly experiments with long takes. To illustrate the point he improvised a simple scene in a little workman's cafe in Cla

ham, where we were talking. He would frame several people in a long shot from over the table, with the table in foreground, then pick out a particular character by some action of his, track in, eliminating the foreground, and stop in a close shot. He claims that this method is unobtrusive and dramatically stronger—if the scene has any real meaning—than cutting to a close shot abruptly.

Unlike Wajda, who apparently improvises a lot on the set, Munk prepares his shooting scripts carefully, down to the detailed drawings of each scene. But this does not mean that the film is created before shooting starts. The script remains a living thing and is changed quite often on the floor, though the changes never seem to go beyond technique. Munk may see on the set new possibilities and—for instance—reverse the direction of movement within a scene, but it won't affect the conception of the scene or its meaning.

Munk is often described as an intellectual director, and for once there is no reason to disagree with the popular verdict. He tries to evolve a style which will grow naturally and logically out of the drama, and with his kind of drama this means a style which engages the intellect directly. At the same time he imposes on his films a kind of contrived, deliberate pattern, shaping them like a well-reasoned argument. This is, I think, why he likes to use an episodic structure, choosing his episodes in such a way that they make conclusions on their own and add up to a statement even at this level. In fact all his features so far are pure arguments against something. The nature of those arguments does not prevent Munk's films becoming works of art at the same time: Munk, after all, stands for human freedom and attacks pressures of conformism in all its guises.

I hope I am not making Munk sound dry and dull. In fact there is great intensity in *Eroica* and some images stay in the mind. These films, one is prepared for some intellectual exercise, can move and disturb and stimulate; they are not likely to leave one with a sense

of physical pleasure, drunk with images.

It is unwise I know to write about a film one has not been able to see, but Munk's *Crosseyed Luck* is so obviously a further development of his ideas both thematically and stylistically, that it would be impossible to leave it out of this article. *Crosseyed Luck* is a story of a conformist and a story of our times. A little man, Jan Piszczyk, tries hard to become a fashionable hero-figure both before, during and after the war. But he is not intelligent enough, or lucky enough to make a success of it. Each of his six incarnations ends in disaster. Landing finally in jail he pleads with the warden to let him stay there. In this place he finds true peace.

Munk finished this bitter comedy last autumn and was then quite pleased with it. There were later reports that it had run into censorship trouble, and the ending had to be changed. When it was finally released this spring, Polish critics received it enthusiastically, agreeing that it was the most important and best Polish film, at least since *Ashes and Diamonds*. But it seems that, again, it's not a box-office success; and at Cannes, where it was officially entered, it passed almost unnoticed. Penelope Houston's report that "Andrzej Munk's comic invention, unhappily, is no match for his Chaplinesque theme" is probably a fair sample of critical reaction there. Perhaps the film is a failure, perhaps it isn't. But one can't help thinking that Western critics somehow miss the point completely. Munk is an avantgarde artist, not in a popular sense of the word, of a man experimenting with extravagant techniques, but as a man creating outside accepted convention. His is a difficult art, requiring perhaps some conscious effort on audiences' part, but the effort is well repayed. His stature seems to grow as intimacy with his work increases. His range may be limited, but the same may be said of almost every true artist: of Bunuel, and Ford, and Bresson, and de Sica. Only the second rate, diluted talents find it easy to tackle all themes, to explore new fields each time.

Eric Rhode, reviewing this film for "Sight and Sound", has as his final comment: "It is, truly, a film that speaks up for life." I quote it because it represents to me as wrong and superficial a view of this film as one is likely to slip into.

What, if anything, does speaking up for life entail? Here, it is the suggestion that the hero, with uncrushable resilience like Terylene, bounces back willy-nilly from the blows of fate. Yet unless you are confused by the fact that Antoine is neither dead nor insensible by the end, this is exactly what he does not do. This film is the record of how an upright, intelligent and sensitive boy is brutalised by his environment ("life"?) into a state of desperation, by which time much of what is good in him has been warped or destroyed. The picture of life, indeed, is painted by a succession of cries of despair. From the hopelessness of what we call education to the gulf between justice and the law.

10 We first meet Antoine Doinel in the schoolroom. (Everyone's nightmare nostalgia this, brilliantly evoked.) We see him picked on by a sadistic master in an unsympathetic, microcosmic world. But home is even worse. His mother, a sexy and self-indulgent slut, engages in embittered rows with his father over money and men. In one of these incredibly realistic scenes, set against the background of their squalid apartment, Antoine learns that they married only to give him

a name. Father, despite a superficial jollity, is easily moved to brutality in crises he does not understand. Antoine's craving for affection, sympathy even, is totally overlooked. Not surprisingly, he has a father-figure outside the home—a juvenile sophisticate who leads him into truancy. Antoine's excuse, back at school, is spontaneously naive, and leads to a public humiliation when his father, in front of the class, brutally slaps his face. Bewildered, he runs away.

But the situation is not serious yet. After a terrified and lonely night in an old printing house, reconciliations are made. Ironically, Antoine's first major trouble is precipitated by his reverence for Balzac, whom he unconsciously imitates in an essay at school. He is sent to the headmaster, for 'plagiarism', runs away again, and embarks on a life of petty crime. He is finally delivered by his father to the police, and committed to an *institution correctionnelle*. The film ends with him escaping from this unholy place, running until he reaches the sea, and turning his troubled rebellious face to the world in a poignant still.

Truffaut's aim in this film is to indict society for the destruction of Antoine—the society that produces a climate of thought in which education is a question of "discipline" and the most abject form of book learning. (Witness the wonderful irony of his mother's remarks!) It is a society that throws unsuited couples and unwelcome children into a tacitly accepted rat-race for survival. A society whose unsympathetic and brutal legal system

reduces this boy to an embittered rebel. All Truffaut's arrows in this regard draw blood. The servile hypocrisy and dingy atmosphere of the schoolroom are magnificently depicted with powerful, and often humorous, realism. For Truffaut has many weapons at the ready—humorous irony not the last. The power and callousness of society against Antoine increases as the film progresses from one spiritual cul-de-sac to another. His statement to the police is reduced by a disinterested clerk to the absurd (and tragic) formula of the official report. His parents disown him largely from spite, and his only friend (who, ironically enough, puts him where he is) is turned away.

The film is brilliantly directed in a totally unobtrusive manner. *Est celare artem*. After the virtues of, say, Chabrol, I had expected to find a preoccupation with technique for technique's sake. Not so. Truffaut never allows the camera to get between us and what he has to say. (Although in such scenes as the fairground 'ride' he shows us what he can do!) His sequences are composed and edited with great economy. It is the highest form of visual reportage, selecting only the core of each situation, leaving it to speak for itself. This is what provides the overall tension of the film. We progress in a series of short powerful shocks to the film masterly trick at the end.

The direction of the acting, too, is altogether delicate and unforced—probably at its best in the sports

LES QUATRE CENTS

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taneous, hesitant realism of the 'psychologist' scene. A good deal of the credit for this goes to Jean Pierre Leaud, who, apparently given his head, plays Antoine as if he had never seen a movie camera in his life. It is a director's film, but the acting is exceptional throughout. Enough to say that all the main characters are wholly believable.

Truffaut's picture of society is eminently acceptable in essence. His exact use of detail builds up an atmosphere of unsentimental realism which reaches out and wholly envelops us. Yet one cannot help but feel that this case would have been stronger had he resisted a certain temptation to overstate. By the end of the film I was wondering whether, so to speak, *Les Quatre Cent Coups* was not one Coup too many. And those harsh experiences which we do not actually see are recapped for us in Antoine's statement at the end. (His near-unfortunate introduction to sex, for example, gives the feeling that there but for the grace of God goes yet another blow.) It is difficult to accept a world where no-one raises a hand to help Antoine, except the friend who also corrupts him. Surely there must be something good, some straw to cling to, in this welter of injustice and neglect, even though for the purposes of the film it might prove inadequate in the end.

True, there are two occasions when Antoine seems to find a more or less satisfying rapport with the world of his parents — *tête à tête* with his father, and on the visit to the cinema after the 'Balzac' fire. But the first of these is clouded by his father's equal loyalty to the mother he despises, and the second is engineered by mother as part of a be-nice-to-the-boy campaign for her own ends. We gather from such scenes, however, that Truffaut does

believe in the power of sympathy and love where it can be made to exist. If so, it is a pity that here it almost never exists. In this I am not asking for solutions to the problem of Antoine. The situation is too complex for them to be other than meretricious within the scope of the film. It is more a question of balance in the presentation of the case.

A similar overstatement, I think, occurs in Antoine's own character. From the time when he was caught with the pin-up after practically the entire class had passed it from hand to hand, he is certainly more sinned against than sinning. A slightly passive figure, who, though cheerful and resilient, is scarcely responsible for the actions that bring society's weight upon him. At first his scrapes are boyish ones. But later it is still not his own rebellion so much as the influence of his more sophisticated friend that leads him into delinquency. The moral behind this passivity, that in our society the weak and the easily led go to the wall while the clever and unscrupulous triumph, comes through. But the picture would have had more general truth had Truffaut risked our sympathy once or twice to show a streak of badness in Antoine, which society, arranged as it is, conspires to develop to the full. The film is basically an apologia for an innocent child perverted and destroyed. But few children are as naive as Antoine, as Truffaut shows in the classroom scenes. And occasionally, very occasionally, this over-sympathy for the hero leads Truffaut into touches of whimsicality which are out of place. (Antoine's disguise when he

returns the typewriter, for instance.) The director is at all costs on the side of the children versus the adult world. Antoine's friend is not censured, even though it is his deliberate if chummy influence that gets Antoine into trouble. And the glimpse of the boys in the institution suggests misunderstood innocents—again difficult to accept. If, for instance, Antoine's fate at the hands of a callous society deserves our sympathy (which it certainly does), why does his mother not deserve compassion too for the environmental influences that made her what she is? And yet her rationalisations of her conduct do not deceive even the boy, let alone us.

But these are minor criticisms of a major film, and they all stem from the same source—the difficulty for Truffaut, with so autobiographical a subject, to stand back far enough from his material, and to make objective as completely as he should. This is certainly one of the most important and successful films to cross the channel in recent years, and the final question it leaves in the mind of an English reviewer is when, in God's name, are we going to produce anything like it over here?

PHILIP RILEY

SCOUPS

HIROSHIMA MON AMOUR

ALAN LOVELL

12

The story that Marguerite Duras wrote for *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* is simple enough. A French actress comes to Hiroshima to make an anti-war film. Her experience of the Hiroshima tragedy, partly through what she herself sees, and partly through her relationship with a Japanese architect, reminds her of her own tragedy. Her love affair with a German soldier was cut short when he was shot by the French Resistance on Liberation day. As a punishment, the Resistance shaved her head; she was locked away in a cellar in disgrace by her parents; she went mad for a time; and when she recovered she left Nevers for Paris.

The film aims to do more than tell this story. Through the story it aims to make connections between Hiroshima and the lives of its characters; to connect war in one place with war in another and to see it as part of the same tragedy; and to explore the workings of memory.

The film's success depends on its opening sequence. It is there that a direct connection between Hiroshima and the lives of the actress and the architect is made. It is this connection that forces the actress to remember her past. Resnais tries to establish it by cutting directly between shots of the couple making love and shots of the effects of the Bomb on Hiroshima. He adds to this by making the lovers' bodies appear in the

opening shots as if they were coated with radio-active dust. The dialogue between the lovers aims at the same effect.

For all Resnais' precise, controlled cutting, the sequence doesn't work. The connections between the individual shots are arbitrary and mechanical. After the opening shots of the bodies coated with dust, the dust disappears and one is left wondering whether it was dust or poor quality film. The lovers are shot so formally and coyly that it is hard at times to know what human activity one is watching. The same formalism makes the shots of the effects of the A-bomb seem remote. Most disastrous of all is Duras' dialogue. She aims for "poetry" of the worst kind and merely succeeds in conveying a good deal of loose pacifist sentiment—"Whole towns rise in anger against the injustice practised in principle by certain races against other races"—and a masochistic feeling for sex—"You are killing me," "Bruise me," "Make me ugly."

After this, Hiroshima drops into the background. The only reminder of it is the architect. He is very cursorily dealt with; a few questions about his background and the rest of the time he acts as a feed for the actress, asking her questions which lead her to recall more and more of her past. By the end of the film he has become almost ridiculous as he follows her round



streets, stations and night clubs. There is no genuine relationship between them. Although the film ends with the actress saying, "You are Hiroshima, and I am Nevers," his connection with Hiroshima is so slight as to be meaningless.

The Nevers sequence opens with more warmth than there is anywhere else in the film, particularly as the camera swings lyrically to follow the girl as she cycles to meet the German. But the main emphasis of the sequence is on the girl's suffering. She is shown staying with the German as he dies slowly and in agony, having her head shaved by the Resistance, locked in her bedroom, mad in the cellar. The German is even more anonymous than the Japanese architect.

The centre of "Hiroshima, Mon Amour" is the actress and her suffering. Finally the success of the film depends on the quality of her experience. If it is an experience that reaches outward, that makes us understand more about Hiroshima, more about war, the film is successful.

In fact, it works in the opposite direction. The social tragedy with

which the film begins leads to the enclosed world of private suffering. It is not even that the memory of this suffering proves liberating for her. At the end of the film, there is no sense of emotional release. Rather is there a feeling of a dead end as the actress waits for the plane and the architect trails hopelessly after her.

This dead end is not accidental. Duras' script, for all its pretensions, is an inflated, self-indulgent love story. Even the Hiroshima tragedy is made into an excuse for her heroine to wallow in her sufferings. Behind all this one can see a tired, depressed moral viewpoint. The lovers are both "happily" married and they accept casual affairs as normal. But these affairs are not taken straight, but dignified into something important—"I feel a great desire to fall in love," he says, "That is always the danger of affairs like this," she replies.

Resnais' technical authority is an effective disguise for the script. Once one realises this, one begins to doubt the use he has put this authority to. For him, as well as Duras, the Bomb seems to be an

excuse. In his case it is an excuse to display his technical talents. (Compare Resnais' direction of the film with Kurosawa's direction of *Living*, which has a similar, unorthodox structure, to see very clearly the difference between a director who uses technique for a purpose and a director who uses technique for display.)

For all its weaknesses, *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* is one of the best examples of the "new wave" films. Its weaknesses are the weaknesses of the whole movement. Despite their liveliness and excitement, the French critics and film makers seem to me to be no more than restating the old doctrine of "art for art's sake." This surely explains their adulation for second rate directors like Hitchcock and Aldrich and fifty-third rate directors like Sam Fuller and Frank Tashlin. Life is nothing more than an excuse for art. This is what the commitment debate in this country a few years ago was all about. The enthusiastic, uncritical response to *Hiroshima* suggests that not many people learnt from that debate. Shouldn't we re-open it?

PATRICIA SKINNER

14

"Before a camera turned on the dance numbers of *Can-Can* there were more than six weeks of hard, intensive rehearsing for Shirley MacLaine, Juliet Prowse and all the others involved. This was essential, Mr. Hermes Pan, the choreographer, explains, to make everything look easy and impromptu." This kind of statement, one would suppose, indicates that Mr. Pan has some feeling about the way to make a musical, but all that the film shows is that those six weeks were largely wasted; nothing looks either easy or impromptu.

Budgeted for just under £2,000,000, every effort appears to have been made to make the locations look authentic. I quote from the programme notes:—"The general design and colourings of the sets were inspired by the works of Toulouse-Lautrec and other French artists of the era when the *Can-Can* won its greatest fame. Tony Duquette, whose reputation is international, was engaged as styling consultant, and Tom Keogh, artist and designer, was brought over from Paris just to design the main title, which strikes the keynote and breathes the essential spirit of *Can-Can*". . .

But why? Shirley MacLaine and Frank Sinatra, as well as all the *Can-Can* girls, are so obviously anything but French, this being emphasised by painful and careful delivery of the odd French phrase by each of the girls in turn. The whole style is so American and so modern. Frank Sinatra and Shirley

MacLaine both have some talent for slick humour of the Pal Joey category (in fact Sinatra just IS Joey), which is quite incongruous in what the studio is attempting to introduce as "Parisian in its background, its characters, the settings of the period in which the action takes place,—above all, in its spirit."

The main dance sequence is a disaster. Juliet Prowse, as the serpent, shows up Adam & Eve (Shirley MacLaine and Marc Wilder) as heavy and awkward in movement, and the piece as a whole is an incredible mixture of styles—a mess. Shirley MacLaine apparently cannot resist the temptation to introduce a light comedy style into a straight ballet presentation. (This also distorts the apache dance sequence earlier in the film.) The Adam & Eve story opens on a stage which to begin with is simply framed by the camera, and when the director decides to move in—he does just that! We advance about halfway across the stage, so that the dancers rush across the screen from side to side (sometimes their heads are out of frame), and there seems to be no reason for this, no flow, and no connection between any of the movements. Against this elaborate fiasco one remembers Gene Kelly 'singin' and dancing' in the rain, and wonders how many more desperately expensive productions will appear before the cinema finds itself at its 'new level'.



COME BACK AFRICA

To what extent can events alter what a film has to say? *Come Back Africa* seems to have changed; it has now in the light of Sharpeville assumed a proportion that previously it lacked. It now provides a background to the recent events, it explains something (not particularly lucidly, though) of the past system, the Africans' life in the cities, and the strange combination of sophistication and naiveté that exist in the "urbanised" African. Since Sharpeville it has absorbed a communication of doom; it lacked climax, except for that brief moment at the end of the film, which now, events themselves have provided.

Traditionally South African, the story is about a simple African from Zululand who comes to the fantastic, raucous city of Johannesburg, Goli—Gold; the centre of a million African dreams. A city of foreign wealth and an unlimited mildew of indigenous jazz; jazz in the shebeen dens and on the pavements before shop windows, the local pop-stars,

and paroxysms that lead to the apparently needless taking of life in Sophiatown, Meadowland and Hill-brow. 15

Zachariah works on the mines hoping that on the expiry of his contract he will be allowed, legally, to enter the area of Johannesburg. But, the pass laws do not allow this, and so a pass is obtained illegally, and Zachariah goes through the inevitable round of jobs; the uneducated domestic in Orange Grove working for an hysterical, insensitive white woman, the erring attendant at a garage, the "rapist" dishwasher at an hotel in the city. Zachariah is subjected to all the petty restrictions and inhumanities that govern the Africans' existence.

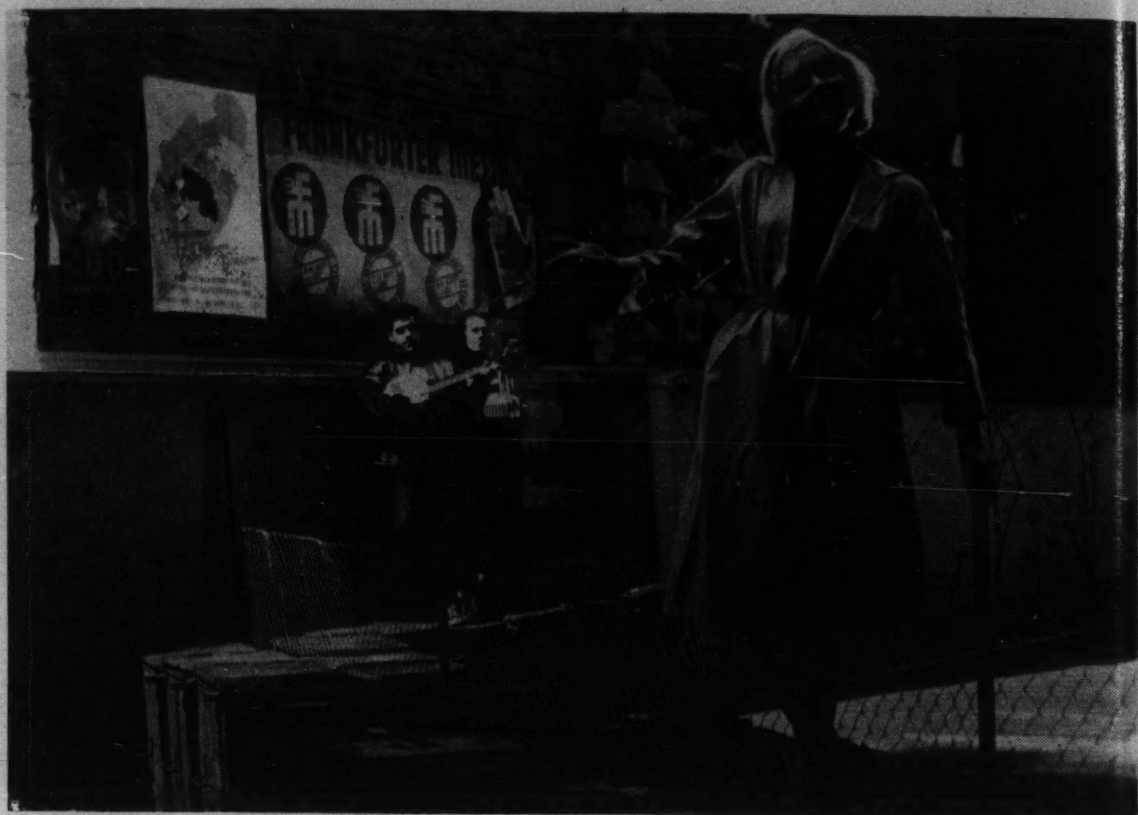
Following Zachariah, Rogosin builds up haphazardly a kaleidoscope of the colour, vitality, humour and deep appreciation of music that exist in the townships, registered like light on the emulsion of the film, but never started or heightened. Zachariah like Everyman goes

through a series of torments, but he is less real. Rogosin never approaches Zachariah firmly, too often is he the "average African of the townships". In his method of filming Rogosin has absorbed many facets of South Africa, but refrains from stating them to his audience. In the scene at the hotel when Zachariah is accused of raping a white woman that he never approached, one realises that this is the phenomenon caused by a society where strong sexual implications exist between black and white. Rogosin is aware of this but has made nothing of it.

Rogosin calls his method of film making "spontaneous cinema", and at times we can see crystallisations of Dickensian-type characters, with an inherent sense of humour, and a pathos that makes them alive. But, that some people are projected from the screen is due to the vitality of their own personalities, and not to Rogosin.

16 Rogosin creates a visual impression of Johannesburg, and it is almost entirely through these impressions that one has any feeling of what life must be like living under the laws of apartheid. Suddenly Rogosin introduces Zachariah and dialogue; it can only be regarded as an intrusion. One can accept the difficulty that Rogosin had in the making of this film, but this surely could not have caused the implanting of sub-titles right across the centre of the face of a person speaking?

ROSS DEVENISH



THE GIRL ROSEMARIE

DAVID NADEN

Prologue. An hotel lobby—a high class turnstile of a revolving door turns in the background with mechanically plush 'pom—pshshs' as the select clientel enter. A bald headed Head Porter, a servile guardian to the people who pass through, sees that the hotel is free of undesirables. When the revolving doors admit Rosemarie, he ushers her out, back to the street—'where she belongs'. (One is reminded of the swing doors in Murnau's *The Last Laugh* and the similar meaning that they had—the dividers of the 'haves' from the 'have nots'). It is too late though Rosemarie has been through the revolving doors and the Opportunity State is before her.

The Girl Rosemary (West Germany. Director: Rof Thiele. 1959) is an attack on Germany's Post War affluent Society—more cynical than satirical—and is a simple story, based on fact, of a grade A prostitute's rise to power and subsequent death. It is mounted in a Brechtian manner and opens with Rosemarie's pimps—two minstrels who continue to appear and musically comment—singing before the hotel. It is interesting to note that they differ from their Brechtian prototypes in as much as, where their originals comment was satirical, pungent, eye-opening, here the minstrel's satire is engrained with self-cynicism—whilst they make their comment—"Banks to the left of us, Banks to the right, and the Freedom Bell kept out of sight", with its refrain "How lucky we are"—they never the less expect Rosemarie's good fortune to be theirs as well, continuing to collect their (increasing) rake-offs from her. They are too much a part of the society they are attacking.

Inside the hotel is a meeting of a group of industrialists (it later turns out that this cartel represents a complete industrial ring—oil, chemicals, the lot). They meet once a month for discussion, lunch and a private evening arranged by the servile guardian from his little address book. One breaks loose and makes his own appointment—with Rosemarie (She's got in!), but she picks up Hartog by mistake (an understandable mistake as they all have black Mercedes). Hartog is the leader of the Cartel, an aristocratic industrialist, and is the only person in the film who is genuinely sympathetic to Rosemarie. He sets her up in her own apartment and introduces her to her new standard of living. But—she wants to marry him. Although attracted to her, it is against Hartog's Code of Behaviour (Nowadays called bad Public Relations) and he refuses. He takes her to his Country Club, forgetting that the Cartel members and their wives would be there for his meeting with a French industrialist Friberg to discuss some important international Business. Hartog sends her away from the Club with the admiration of its male members and the indignant snickers of its female members, but she meets Friberg arriving and gets him to take her back.

Rosemarie goes to a party held by members of the cartel and their wives, not that she can really use her power but merely to enjoy it. She succeeds and attracts the members away from their wives. The sequence ends with a glorious definition of upper class charity... One of the wives, mostly out of boredom, offers to jump as she is, into the bathing pool if someone will donate £500 to Charity. Friberg accepts the challenge. She hesitates, the water is uninviting. Friberg urges—for CHARITY! so hand to nose, she jumps in. Inspired by this benevolent gesture, others follow, urged by their husbands.

Later she meets Friberg again, and he introduces her to the next step on her increasing standard of living—International Glamour. Just the thing for tired industrialists. The tired business man desires human company to find release for his domestic and business troubles, someone to confide in and realise that he is ordinary like everyone else! Rosemarie! But, now Rosemarie is in business,—tape recording their conversations with her as, one by one they come,—for Friberg to collect information to send back to France.

Now she has power over them, and over Friberg too, as she records her conversations with the Frenchman also—unfortunately, she doesn't know what to do with them. She hasn't the qualities in her to use them for bribery and they are useless in her one wish—to marry Hartog. She appeals to a seller of "Watchtower" the mouthpiece of rational religion' who crosses her path occasionally and is presented as something of an intellectual. He would like to help, initially as a result of his beliefs and then for personal interest; but is right out of key with the contemporary scene. "Dance with me" pleads Rosemarie. He is unable. So much for Intellectuals!

Finally, Rosemarie agrees to meet the interested parties to discuss the return of the tapes and they follow her to her flat where she is shot by a small time crook. The cartel melt away, one by one in their black Mercedes. They don't want to know. The film ends with a repeat of the prologue with the next protege of the minstrels.

Motorised

18

For a film whose showings have been confined to film societies and a handful of specialist cinemas, *The Wild One* has achieved a disproportionate degree of notoriety. It was denied a certificate on the grounds that it might incite youthful owners of motorcycles to public disorder; the idea of a "wild one" has since become a Press symbol (no doubt faithfully accepted by many readers who have not seen the film) of teenage lawlessness. On March 21, for example, the major daily papers all carried a story about "wild ones" invading Brighton. These stories alleged, roughly, that some sixty youths on motor scooters, many wearing black leather jackets (another well-known symbol of lawlessness), had driven together from London to Brighton, terrorised the citizens and started a fight with local youths which led to several injuries from broken bottles. Frequent reference was made in the reports to *The Wild One*, in explanation of which terms like "motor cycle hoodlums" were freely bandied about. Particular attention was drawn to the fact that an excerpt from the film had been shown a few weeks before on television. And only a day or two afterwards did some papers admit that their reports were false, and that the fighting was started by the (non-scooterised) Brighton gang. So much for objectivity; but like *The Angry Silence*, *The Wild Ones* is too neat and slick a label to pass up.

It's true that if you think in terms of labels and symbols, then they come to mind easily enough; and if you write for the daily press, you're likely to find more uses for a label like "The Wild Ones" than for, say, "Absolute Beginners." But for all this, I think that in the case of *The Wild One* there are evasive fumbings and confusions in the film itself which give rise to this sort of labelling. These confusions

start, in fact, with the title and credits. The film opens with a ground-level shot, looking along the white line in the centre of a deserted road. We hear a voice, meditating on the "trouble": "It all started with the girl . . . All I know is, it could never happen again." Then, appearing as specks in the distance, motor cycles come up the road, very fast, the last one swerving at the last instant to avoid the camera. The credit titles announce: Marlon Brando as "The Wild One." The most immediate feeling you get from this opening is its sensationalism. Secondly, you are aware of some artificiality, because the sudden swerve of the last machine has made you conscious of the camera. Thirdly, although the film is about the "trouble," and about the motor cyclists as a group, it leans heavily on Brando in his role as Johnny, the leader of the Black Rebels Motorcycle Club. How important this is becomes apparent later in the film; to my mind, it is the root cause of most of the confusion.

The first part of the film, and the most straightforward, is chiefly descriptive. The Black Rebels interrupt a motor cycle race, brush with the race officials and police, ride on to a small town where they stop for gas and "drag for beers." A minor accident follows; they browbeat the local police chief into taking no action. While the gang settle down to some drinking, Johnny is trying to impress the waitress, Kathie, and failing. He is about to pull his supporters out of the town when a rival gang appears. The leader of this gang involves Johnny in a fight, more out of respect for ritual than anything else; for when the fight is interrupted by an angry citizen, they join forces against him. The vacillating police officer, at first announces the arrest of the citizen and Johnny's rival, then changes his mind and frees the

citizen. Back in the bar, he tries to do a deal with Johnny, and is rebuffed, largely because Johnny has just realised that he's Kathie's father. Both gangs settle down again, to wait for one of their number, who was hit by the angry citizen's car, to return from hospital; as they drink, they get rowdy—but there is no violence and little damage. Here is one of the film's strengths—that it establishes with an admirable economy the aimlessness which can lead into rowdiness bordering on violence. At the same time, I feel that this achievement in setting the scene is not matched in the portrayal of the people involved. The Rebels are shown as lawless and irreverent, but basically good-humoured and attractive. Occasionally it looks like the humour of the performing animal, as in the scene where some of the boys confuse the old barman by talking hip language at him. This is perhaps the most noticeable example; but the whole of this part of the film is marked by the same lack of depth. The hip talk and behaviour is presented externally—you begin to suspect, as a gimmick, to give the squares in the audience the feeling that they're really up to date if they understand this. Here, as throughout the film, only Brando has any depth.

This reliance on Brando has been less noticeable in the first part, because the action has been kept to the minimum, in order to concentrate on setting the scene. With the outbreak of violence in the second part, the film tries to explore motivations and to moralise; at this point, the gang drops out of account altogether. They rescue Johnny's rival from the jail and substitute the "tough" citizen: some of them chase Kathie on their machines, and others are seen doing sporadic damage. Otherwise, we do not see them until the end of the film. The action concentrates on Johnny

Western

Kathie and the citizens. Johnny rescues Kathie from the others; an inconclusive scene between them leads to her running away. The citizens jump to the conclusion that Johnny has tried to rape her, catch Johnny after a long melodramatic chase, and beat him up. He escapes on his motor cycle; a tyre-iron is flung at him, knocking him off the machine, which runs out of control and kills a passer-by. The film ends with the State police running the Rebels out of town; Johnny has been cleared from suspicion by the belated and shamefaced evidence of two bystanders.

In all this, something seems to have gone wrong. Firstly, the dropping out of account of the gang and the concentration on Johnny, linked with the accidental nature of the old man's death. Although the gang are presented as amusing and amiable eccentrics, the general build-up of the film is to an expectation of violence as a result of their presence in the town. The film seems to lose weight when they disappear from the screen. In a sense, the old man's death and Johnny's beating-up are indirectly connected with the gang; but they are both too contrived and artificial to have any real connection with the rest of the film. This is partly due to the sketchy and unimaginative way in which the townspeople are portrayed. The main characters here could have come straight from a classic Western: a liberal "softie," a hard-headed realist, a weak-willed cop who can do nothing but sit with whisky and revolver, muttering that the tough guy "always was a bully." The whole structure and setting of the film, in fact, are reminiscent of the Western—a gang of outsiders bringing trouble to a peaceful community; even the aerial shot of the town which marks the Rebels' arrival and departure gives this impression. At no point can the film be said to be realistic: our

awareness of the camera is revived time after time by the staginess of the sets, and the characters of the townspeople in particular seem very artificial. They are not real people with names, but familiar types, put into the film in order to repeat those parts of the film's argument which have been written into their scripts. This would be less jarring if the film were a parable, like *The Defiant Ones*, or if we knew what it was trying to say. But this film seems, on a descriptive basis, to be trying to follow the liberal practice of giving all points of view; the result is confusion.

After the accident, when Johnny is freed, the State police officer says, in so many words, "I don't know if there's any good in you at all, I'll take a chance on it." When he sends the Rebels off, he tells them that all damage will be charged to them, and that they'd be wise not to put themselves inside his county again. When we have seen that Johnny's actions have been basically good and not particularly wild, and that even the gang is only responsible for some damage, these statements seem just unbalanced. Johnny is not "The Wild One"; when the violence was going on, the gang were somewhere else; the wildest people around were the citizens. If the gang are wild, why just move them into the next county? Could it, after all, happen again? We are asking these questions, trying to work out the rights and wrongs of the situation, when we should be aware that a man has been killed and that peaceful conduct has been broken down in a very disturbing way. This is because the situation is artificial; the violence perfunctory and arbitrary.

This is the measure of the film's reliance on Brando's performance. Against Kathie's dullness, the townspeople's artificiality, and the gang's extravagance, Brando stands

out as a real presence. His performance adds a lot to the stature of the first part of the film: his mumbling introspection is what is required. But in the second part, particularly the chase sequence, his personality is lost in the melodramatic treatment of the situation. And at the end, his silence under police questioning, while quite in character, does not fit the moralising mood of the film. Again, we are left with an odd feeling: that Brando has been playing in the wrong film. He is not the wild one, but the inscrutable one. Because of his performance, I am reminded of *Ashes and Diamonds*; in particular, of the relationship between Maciek and Krystyna as compared with that between Johnny and Kathie—the one a source of moral clarity, the other, of moral confusion. This points to a wider comparison, between the moral scales on which the two films operate. Where *Ashes and Diamonds* seems to be crying out about the state of the world, *The Wild One* has difficulty in knowing what to say about a rather small situation. But when so many films take everything for granted, even this is an achievement. *The Wild One* is a film of serious intent; but it lacks the confidence to maintain its intention, and it confuses seriousness with moralising.

ROD PRINCE

SYNOPSIS FOR

The following is a synopsis and extracts from a shooting script written by Arnold Wesker shortly after he had completed his course at the London School of Film Technique. It was liked by the Committee of the BFI Experimental Film Fund, but its budget, estimated at £3,000, was considered beyond their means. No commercial company would have been interested in such a modest venture, especially as Arnold Wesker wished to direct it himself with a non-professional cast. So after a few test shots on 16mm the project was dropped. The short story on which the script was based later appeared in the *Jewish Quarterly* of winter 1958.

POOLS



This is a simple and pathetic story about an old woman whose husband was killed in the ARP, whose son is married and living out of London with his wife and child, and whose daughter is married to a colonial servant and is living in Egypt. The old woman now lives on her own in an LCC estate in London.

When all the family were together, they, like a million other families, did the pools. It was a normal occurrence and was carried out with an indifferent regularity.

But as one by one the father was killed and the son and daughter became a ritual, taking the place left alone to carry on the pools which, in the course of many years, became a ritual taking the place of the happiness she should have found in her family. The Tuesday on which the coupon was filled in and the Sunday on which they were checked were the two days around which her life was centred, for she imagined that without a doubt she would one day win the pools and with the vast sum of money reunite at least the children around her loneliness.

She would let no one fill in the coupon, make out the postal order, check or post it for her. She trusted no one but herself. Great care was taken and if she made an error she would re-write the whole thing again. She always had three sets of forms. She would never check on a Saturday night but always after breakfast on Sunday morning, about nine.

The only other thing in her life was the Friday night when her son and his wife and child were for a meal-cum-visit. She would prepare for this vigorously. Polishing, cleaning, and cooking for the occasion.

But it was not as important to her as pools night.

One day the neighbours, knowing she was not well off, collected some money so that she might have a holiday in return for the help she had so often given them.

She was very pleased and went for the holiday she had planned to have when she had won the pools. This was a fortnight in a beautiful little out-of-the-way village.

With a farewell from the neighbours she set off and on her arrival

A FILM

BY

ARNOLD WESKER

the first thing she did was to lay a definite order for her Sunday newspapers. She arrived on the Friday evening, and Saturday was spent being very happy looking around the village, buying little presents, eating sandwiches on the sands, dozing and thoroughly enjoying herself.

Sunday morning came and she awaited the arrival of her papers on the breakfast tray. The landlady blithely informed her they had not come.

The poor old lady became agitated. The other borders had not arrived, the owners did not read newspapers. There were no shops open in the little village. She hurriedly took a bus to the nearest town. The few shops were open had sold out... As is usual when one wants a thing badly there was no newspaper to be had anywhere.

22 She saw a man leaning against the lamp-post reading a paper, but she could not possibly ask him. She saw through the windows of guest houses the coffee morning guests reading their papers, but she could not burst in on their Sunday quiet and ask them to let her check her pools.

Then she saw a little newspaper boy struggling with a large bike and she caught him and managed to obtain a copy of the paper from him. She was a little more than worried now. They had to be checked. How would she be able to tell them she had won.

She found a cafe and in an inauspicious corner ordered some tea and sat down to check her pools. Then to her horror she found she had left the pools coupon in her bag back at the inn.

Without waiting for the tea she left the cafe and caught the bus back. The journey seemed twice as long, and in her agitation and fear of what might happen she went past her stop, and because of this she hurried off and left the paper behind.

Back at the inn she searched for the coupon and on finding it realized the paper was not there. At this point she broke down. The pillar of her existence was threatened.

But she was a woman who had struggled long, and with characteristic determination decided that

London was the only place where she could get her paper. There was nothing else for it but to pack and return...

This she did. Nowhere along the route could she find a newspaper. The people around her were reading but she was too ashamed to ask them.

On arriving at Liverpool Street she was overwhelmed by the immensity and rush of everything which, in her present state of panic, was too much for her. She hunted the stalls for a paper, dodging in between the trucks.

The first stall was empty, the second deserted, the third sold only cheap novelties, the fourth had only last night's paper and there was no one selling them, the fifth sold flowers, and the last one was just packing up.

The remainder of the story is covered in our final extract from the script.



48 Exterior

High shot of workers coming out of clothing factory. It is a dull, rainy day.

49 Exterior

Ms of a stall nearby factory just packing up. *Pan* away from stall to factory as people come out. *Mrs Hyams* comes out. She looks very low as she walks down the street. *Pan* with her a little way. *Dissolve*

50 Exterior

Ls of Fashion Street as *Mrs Hyams* walks down it and enters No. 43. *Hold* this shot.

51 Interior

From widow below flat. *Mrs Hyams* is slowly mounting the last flight of stairs. She reaches her door, takes out her key, unlocks door and enters.

52 Interior

From inside room. *Mrs Hyams* enters through door. *Pan* with her as she wearily moves to hang up her coat. Camera *holds* coat and *Mrs Hyams* moves out of frame. *Dissolve slowly*.

53 Interior

Mrs Hyams is sitting at her table filling out her pools. She is rather depressed this evening and pauses in her work looking disgustedly at her copy.

Mrs Hyams: Tell me, out of all those people why should *Mrs Hyams* win £75,000?

She rises and moves to the fireplace. She picks up poker and pokes fire. Then, still with poker in her hand she catches her image in the mirror.

Mrs Hyams: (To her image) You *Mrs Hyams* you! Mishiganah!

Camera *tracks* to *cu*.

Mrs Hyams: Every time you post your coupon five more post it in just that second. And how many seconds are there? (Nods her head) And everybody thinks that for their little penny they're going to get £75,000. (Nods her head)

Camera *tracks* away and *pans* with her as she sits in armchair.

Mrs Hyams: Who's going to give you all that money? Every week you break your heart! Meat pies in the sky! (Sadly) You got no more real dreams. (Shrugs her shoulder) Nu, so what else shall I do?

She rises and moves to the table to continue her pools. As she sits down she regards the coupon and seems about to tear it up but relents. She bends to her task again and picks up pen as though nothing had happened. *Pan* to window, it is raining outside. *Slow fade out*.

27 Interior. Liverpool St., Day

Engine moves slowly out of platform. *Hold* this picture till train is right out of sight. Camera continues to *hold* shot of empty lines and we hear—as though it were still in front of us—the clickity clack of the train. In addition to the sound of the train the general noise of London is brought

in and this sound is held on into the next shot as slowly *dissolve*

73 Exterior

Front of village station. *Mrs Hyams* is seen coming out of station, she approaches camera and stops just before it, setting down her case. She seems to be listening to something. All this time we have heard the noise of the train and city, even here in the village. But as *Mrs Hyams* approached camera the noise began to die down. A second after she had set down her case the noise had completely died away. There is a moment's silence and then—we hear the sound of the sea. *Mrs Hyams* smiles to herself, sighs, picks up her bag and walks on past camera. *Dissolve*

74 Exterior

On a road near the guest house. *Bus* approaches and stops. *Mrs Hyams* alights and someone points out to her which is the guest house. She walks towards it.

75 Interior

Inside the guest house are two children playing. They are naked: *Mrs Hyams* comes through the open front door and the children look up. *Pan* to where they look. *Mrs Mortimer* is heard calling them.

76 Interior

Cu of children. They turn from gazing at *Mrs Hyams* to where the voice of their mother came from and then back again to *Mrs Hyams*.

77 Interior

Cu *Mrs Hyams* as she looks at the children.

78 Interior

Long shot of hall and passage taking in *Mrs Hyams*, children, *Mrs Mortimer*. At that moment *Mr Mortimer* appears. Everyone is looking at *Mrs Hyams* and *Mrs Hyams* is looking at the children. Suddenly.

Mrs Hyams: They won't catch cold?

136 Exterior

Ls of open, silent countryside.

137 Interior

Cu children's sprawling toys on the floor.

138 Interior

The house is empty, a door slightly ajar and swinging.

139 Exterior

If possible camera follows the wide sweep of a bird in flight till it settles on a tree or hedge.

140 Interior

Cu of *Mrs Hyams*. Her head is resting in her hands. She mutters to herself in Yiddish. 'I must go home.' Camera *tracks* away as she begins to gather her things.

141 Exterior

Ls of the open countryside.

142 Interior as 137

Cu children's toys. Camera *pans* towards the stairs as *Mrs Hyams* comes down them. She leaves her case in the hall, enters the kitchen and leaves a note on the table. Then she returns to her case, picks it up and moves out of frame. Now we *track* in slowly to *cu* of note. It reads: 'Thank you Mrs Mortimer, but I must go back quickly to London. *Mrs Hyams*.' Camera *holds* this shot while: softly at first, but growing louder, the sound of the sea comes to us as we read the note. The sound of the sea and other noises of the countryside. Then, as it reaches a crescendo we *cut* to

143 Interior

The noise of a train, *cu* of *Mrs Nyams* sitting in the carriage. She is biting her nails and looking sideways at the people next to her who are reading newspapers. *Pan* just slightly to give the impression of a glance, and then back to *Mrs Hyams* who now looks in front of her.

144 Interior

People on the other side of the compartment are also reading papers.

145 Interior

Poor *Mrs Hyams* sinks into herself and slowly turns her head to the window.

146 Exterior

From the train we can see the countryside pass by.

147 Interior

Mrs Hyams still looks out of the window. Her lips quiver.

148 Exterior

From the moving train the face of the landscape has changed, so too the time of day. It is getting near evening. There are sounds other than the train, factory sounds.

149 Exterior

From the yards of a factory we see the train speed by.

150 Interior

Mrs Hyams in the carriage now regards the man at her side with hatred. He has dozed off and the paper lies limp in his hands.

151 Exterior

From the moving train the view is now that of the city, the murky evening of silhouettes. The train is slowing down and the clatter of the city reaches us.

152 Interior

Inside Liverpool Street Station.

153 Interior

From near the barrier of one of the platforms. The train is drawing in. It stops, people pour out

of the carriages. *Mrs Hayams* is among them and approaches the barrier, ticket in her hands and makes her way towards the newsagents. *Pan* with her.

154 Interior

The newsagents in the station, it is closed. *Mrs Hyams* enters frame, sees it is closed and moves off. *Pan* a little with her.

156 Exterior

A news vendor is just packing up. *Mrs Hyams* enters frame and asks him something. He shakes his head. She moves away and looks agitatedly around.

157 Exterior

Another closed newsagent's.

158 Exterior

Deserted newsboards lean against the wall.

159 Exterior

A vendor is selling lurid magazines. *Mrs Hyams* approaches and asks him something. He shakes his head pointing out that he only sells magazines.

160 Exterior

Cu Nude magazine.

161 Exterior

Cu True Story.

162 Exterior

Mrs Hyams is leaning against the wall, she does not know what to do.

163 Interior

Ls milling crowds in station.

164 Exterior

Cu *Mrs Hyams*. She mutters to herself in Yiddish.

Mrs Nyams: If I have no paper I cannot check my pools. If I cannot check my pools I won't see that I've won. I must send a telegram.
She moves off out of frame.

165 Interior

Long line of telephone booths in station. *Mrs Hyams* looks into each one until she finds one vacant and then enters.

166 Interior as 163

Ls milling crowds in station.

167 Interior

From outside the telephone kiosk we can see *Mrs Hyams* gesticulating while sending her gram. We can just about hear her voice.

Mrs Hyams: Yes—that's right—seventy-five thousand pounds. *Mrs Hyams*—no, *Hyams* H-y-a-m-s. 43 Fashion Street, East End 1.

168 Interior as 165

Long line of telephone booths. *Mrs Hyams* comes out of kiosk. She leans against the kiosk and takes a handkerchief to her eyes and nose. She is weeping.

169 Interior

Cu of *Mrs Hyams*. As she is blowing her nose her eyes see something on the ground.

170 Interior

Cu newspaper on the floor, the back with the football results is showing uppermost. Feet are walking over it.

171 Interior as 169

Mrs Hyams finishes blowing her nose, her eyes look right and then left to see that no one is looking, then she darts forward to pick up the newspaper.

172 Interior

Ms Mrs Hyams retrieving the paper from under people's feet. She looks at it and satisfied that it is what she wants she looks around for somewhere to go.

173 Interior

From the ground we look up at the sign indicating 'Women's toilet'. *Tilt* down to discover *Mrs Hyams* entering.

174 Interior

Inside the toilet we see *Mrs Hyams* placing penny in slot, she enters cubicle.

175 Interior

High shot looking down into cubicle as *Mrs Hyams* enters. She closes door behind her, lays her case on top of the seat and kneels down to it, laying out her paper and then withdrawing her coupon from her bag. She begins to check.

176 Interior

Cu over *Mrs Hyams* shoulder taking in her face and part of the coupon she is checking. As she makes her marks we see her shake her head, shrug her shoulders—no, no! Not this week.

177 Exterior

The mad noise and rush of the street outside the station.

178 Interior

Women's toilet. Sadly *Mrs Hyams* comes out clutching the paper in her hand. She looks around, rather lost, drops the paper and moves slowly off: Camera holds paper.

179 Exterior as 177

The Street outside the station. *Pan* to entrance out of which *Mrs Hyams* walks, case in hand. Now follow her as she crosses the road and becomes lost among the traffic.

INSIDE THE STRAIT

ANDREW SINGER

26

"How much will it cost?", asks the distributor who will sell your film to the circuits and independent cinemas. "£15,000" you reply "without the interest charges." "Then you're over second feature price, aren't you?" You know that, but thought another try worthwhile in case he had read the story, liked it and felt tolerant. Automatically he has given a second feature rating—on cost. Merit isn't considered; whether the story could top the bill or not, the formula rating has condemned it.

The distributor knows that £15,000 is the maximum return he can expect on a second feature from the industry of which he is a willing part. Second features play cinemas on a flat-rate payment, and not a percentage of the box-office returns as with first features. Interest charges on money borrowed to make a film are only one facet of 'loading' the budget; hence all films really cost far less than their published production cost.

It is useless protesting that cutting the budget to an arbitrary figure means the loss of crucial scenes which will then have to be described in dialogue—if at all—and a typical second feature make-shift. The distributor can't help you and in many cases doesn't care. He knows his market—after all he's helped to make it—is determined to protect it and caters accordingly. Unless the producer or other type of 'angel' wishes to stand personally responsible for the extra money there is very little chance of it being found from industry sources. There is also very little chance of

it ever been seen again if it is found either. On flat-rate bookings a potential percentage is out of the question.

The distributor knows his market is one vast interlocking of production, distribution and exhibition interests where basic attitudes and practices overcome any governmental anti-monopolistic devices, if and when they are applied, so why should he try? Follow the selling of modest-budget feature, which has received praise, once its cost is known. Despite awards, festivals, and sometimes stars, its budget will be the criterion—even by the 'art-house' procurers.

It must be remembered that the problem facing enterprising filmmakers is by no means only financial, but also of getting the film shown afterwards—as many fine films have found to their cost.

"Who's in it?" goes on the distributor. He has a slack morning, likes meeting 'artistic' people occasionally and anyway, he went to school with your uncle. You also play the game. Who's in it? A young actor and actress, ideal for the parts.

"Never heard of them. What have they done? The don't mean a thing at the box-office!"

They don't; nor do many stars these days, but that's no answer. Stars have status, they are something by which to measure a production. And when in doubt, always apply the principles that "have made the industry what it is today..." So you explain, tactfully of course, that your two unknowns could be star material. Your film

JACKET

might prove this. How else are stars made—if stars are a fit subject for discussion, you murmur inwardly.

"But why don't you use so-and-so?" the distributor suggests two well-known second-feature leads who are thirty and look forty—as they deserve. With a deep breath you tell him the story concerns two teenagers—obviously it's unread. Can he think of two British teenage stars—with talent? Can he think of two British teenage stars? He can't.

"But the circuits won't give a damn about two unknowns" he almost pleads with you (unless they come from their own ill-chosen roster). Not even in a teenage story? Surely a picture about teenage life could draw the youngsters—aren't they the only ones going to the pictures these days?

"Not in this country—anyway that's only true if it's an American film. Tommy Steele is an exception. (Why?) Now if we had somebody like James Dean it would be different." Why again, indeed. You insist mentioning the hopes of your two unknowns, the significance of Dean and the other figures of American life in an industry more in contact with its contemporary than ours. Because in a sense the distributor is right; a star is an insurance for a film, a protection of the investment; they give the film a level. Even on a flat-rate basis, looking they give some bargaining length with the circuits—the real price-setters.

If 1000-ft cans of plain celluloid made more money we'd have a

canned celluloid business—and why not? That's all films are for after all. They still represent one of the most profitable business investments—£1 for £1—in the world. What other speculation can show a profitable return so quickly? Or a better way of spreading losses from other industries? And again, trade always followed films—and doesn't it now?

"Can't you change the story a little—to take some stars?" persists the distributor. He is quite reasonable really and perhaps short on product and perhaps with certain pretensions which make him want to associate with something enterprising but without risk being involved. You promise to think it over. "Who's going to direct it?"

Here it comes. Once again you mention a name—a young documentary director whose talent you admire. He is in sympathy with the story, has suggested players and, naturally, is enthusiastic about his first feature film.

"What's he done before?"

Very little in features—how could he? But a lot of documentaries, many with actors and dialogue—good training for feature work. He even has awards. "Yes... but can he knock out 80 minutes of film in four weeks?"

He's got you. You don't know. A four weeks studio schedule, the absolute maximum allowed normally on a second feature means 20 working days, means an average of four minutes screentime every day, means very fast work by everybody concerned, means experience, means no overtime. That rate of shooting often means a lack of interest too.

With a young director still feeling his way, fledgling stars, all unused to studio routine and atmosphere, are you sure he can knock out four minutes a day—every day?

Can your people do it? You hope so. But if they can't? Over the schedule, over the budget, over the barrel. Editing and finishing too are little more than a short period to join the shots together. "You ought to use what's-his-name? He's fast and very efficient."

You agree to the speed and efficiency but try to make your preference clear in terms of artistry and sensitivity. The distributor grunts sympathetically but thinks you mad! Who gets lyrical about sausages? Nevertheless, he has a point. In a crisis, a certainty for enterprise within the formula, what's-his-name would knock out screentime day after day, finish on schedule and save the investment—and £15,000 is a fair investment when it becomes your responsibility. Would your man be able to do the same. Can you inflict that upon him? Most producers decide to use what's-his-name. Their own fee is safe within the budget figure: it's a comfortable sum and two such amounts a year keep life amusing. Sausages make friends and influence people.

You had planned to ease the pressure by having a longer shooting schedule, and nearby locations, thus saving on studio costs, a heresy against the established practices of a four-week studio schedule. "That's where your cash is going." The distributor is prompt to save what he considers an indulgence. "Cut that schedule for a start."

forget those locations and fake it up in the studio somehow. You'll be well inside budget then"—and the formula.

"But we'll lose all realism that way. The locations will save studio hire and we would work with a reduced crew."

The distributor is incredulous and you know why. "Will the union wear that? Below minimum crewing?" You hope so. Approached honestly, the A.C.T.T. might relax its rigid rules and practices for the crewing of feature films. It might, though it hasn't done so yet. Years of double-dealing and conflict by all sides of the industry has made it rightly wary of precedents. With a complete closed shop and a certain amount of security, it still remembers the bitter years of exploitation and is on guard against a return to them. Understandable of course, but none the less a frustrating handicap to ventures where every penny really counts, and where full crewing is unnecessary.

"I don't know whether we can use a second feature at the moment anyway" muses the distributor. "You can't put them with the big films to-day because they make the programmes too long and interfere with the advertising."

Over a short subject another argument is raised—if your subject is in any way out of the norm of a hand-out travelogue or a still-life miscellany. Again, the distributor utters a certain truth—to his lights. Under the present systems, a good short subject nearly always costs more than it gets back on release, for it too is on a flat-rate booking. So why back them?

As always, back the principles "which have made the industry what it is to-day..." Cost before creativity. How young talents are to learn their trade and sometimes their art in an industry crucially dependent upon talent nobody knows—or cares. And don't mention television film production—try it, just for coffin size. "If you can re-write it for so-and-so, cut the schedule, shove in some rock-and-roll and sex it up a bit, we may be interested."

You thank him, without imitating his 'mid-Atlantic' style, and leave.

The usual waste of time. For apart from financial barriers, your story concerns two teddyboys at odds with the world, who do not reform or dress decently by the end,—the only two finales allowed by the censor in films attempting to deal sympathetically with the protests of young people.

The Army and railway sequences were tricky too. The military authorities had already written through their charming P.R.O. that they were unable to co-operate as they felt an implicit criticism of their regime in the plot, while the nationalised authority had tactfully withdrawn its facilities as it felt the story 'unconventional'—the two boys hang around a London station looking for pick-ups and trouble.

A 'good' war film (name your favourite) is a different matter. The costs of hundreds of servicemen extras and their uniforms and equipment are not borne on the back of that production—at union prices and current transport charges which is a producer's lot without 'official' co-operation.

Many other subjects receive similar treatment by the censors—both direct and implicit. Corrupt police, civic skulduggery, capital punishment, direct social criticism are killed at birth of course. And that goes for 'X' films as well—whose subject matter is still limited despite the classification. One major circuit still books them sparingly and friend distributor isn't going to back a film with a doubtful release chance or spend money on scenes the censor will delete after production. Scripts therefore are submitted before filming commences for safety's sake! The circuit's answer that it caters for a 'family-type' audience is easily demolished by its own current crop of violence and hysteria.

Nor is it only the so-called 'problem' film that has difficulties. The distributor hasn't yet advised submitting the script to his New York associates to vet for the American market and to suggest a has-been Hollywood name for the lead (your script should automatically include such a character); or to pass on a colleague's opinion

that "the script doesn't rise above the social level of its opening line"

Problem films are the least of troubles. An attempt to make a truly erotic 'sex' film would receive similar treatment. Titillation is what's wanted.

But this American vetting is perhaps the most pernicious practice of recent production developments. It is almost wholly responsible for the spate of American-styled British films emanating from pseudo-British companies. Gutless hybrids, these films lack the best of both national traditions and enhance neither.

So why make a second feature? Because, with the investment small and the pressures, in the past, have been less, thus offering some scope for enterprise and the gaining of experience. Step up to co-feature status—£30,000—and in roll the demands—the insurances; recognising stars, a 'good' story, a director with five similar films under his belt, all belly, (many distributors stipulate such a condition for a second feature). And the stars begin demanding bigger slices of the screen scenes to suit their personalities, their agents or their fans. Even those who have retained some vestige of artistry and want to make enterprising films are often defeated by the fear of the prestige demands of the industry. (The industry is often used as an excuse by creative elements. The excuse shouldn't be accepted.)

Increase your budget to feature class—£60,000 and over—and the demands often overwhelm established personnel—who subscribe anyway. This is fair enough. £60,000 needs protection. It is so much responsibility, but if the insurances are no longer safeguards, should new clauses be inserted and policies introduced? If the record of our film industry is anything to go by, we have the worst business men in the world.

The effects of such practices on second feature or co-feature or feature and the results are obvious. As serious is the pressure on films whose natural budgets are £40,000, allowing for enterprise without skimping. Either they cut to conform or inflated by the evils mentioned above.

And why go to a distributor? Because he can supply up to 70% of your total budget finance, and once obligated in this fashion must give the initial push to your film on release in order to recoup the amount he has advanced. In addition he has the organisation to sell your film throughout the country—salesmen, publicists, transport—and very often the circuit.

Once upon a time, banks put up the bulk of production money without much protection, but after getting badly burned by eminent figures in the industry, they demanded assurance of release and returns. In such a situation the link between distributor and banker must grow ever-stronger and the power of the former, deep in production and exhibition, should not go unnoticed. The first step to obtain production finance is the 'distribution guarantee'—a promise of release which will earn the 70% which the associated bank advances. This figure is not an arbitrary one but assessed on the story's stature, the scale of production, its stars, its schedule and similar factors—it can be less.

Your budget is scrutinised by the distributor's production experts and their decisions are final—or no money. The next 25% normally comes from the National Film Finance Corporation, the Government film bank set up to encourage independent production. They too script and budget closely and follow industry attitudes and procedures completely. They too demand a distribution guarantee and reward their efforts by charging interest on their loan to you at 1½% above current bank rate! They too must make profit—that they don't go beyond the scope of this particular article.

So far we have encountered distributor with his loan and interest charges, and N.F.F.C. with its loan and interest charges. The N.F.F.C. in addition, also lays down the order of payments and costs to stars and personnel which make up the budget submitted to them. The final 5% is usually covered by the payment of story rights, scripting, pre-production costs, all normally borne by the producer and becoming his contribution to

the budget. Some of this money can be raised by deferred payments to the stars or writer or director and in some cases by the producer waiving his right to immediate payment, although these amounts are shown in the budget. This system allows the producer to raise his 5% on paper or a group of creative talents to come together and make a film. Nevertheless finding even 5% of £15,000 can be a problem. 'Loading' too finds happy hunting grounds here and other places when the budget is a mammoth one.

Adding up the 100% is not the end of the long, long trail. Distributor and N.F.F.C. insist upon insurances to cover any eventuality of the film not being completed—despite their own stringent safeguards and formulae. So a 'completion guarantee' has to be negotiated from one of the companies specialising in this practice. For the payment of a hefty premium, they agree to cover all the costs which may be involved if the film goes over budget. Naturally script and schedule are scrutinised severely before the cover is issued. Any objection can set the whole wearisome business of re-negotiation in motion again—beginning with friend distributor! Naturally, if the film does go over budget, the first to suffer is the producer whose potential share of the film's returns goes to pay the excess.

From the release returns, the distributor charges first a 25% sales tax or distribution levy for the use of his organisation! He then repays the 70% guarantee, plus his *accrued* interest. The N.F.F.C. then follow and then, sometimes, the producer and any other creative talents involved. Profits are shared according to contractual agreement, with distributor and N.F.F.C. taking major shares.

What industrial product can stand up to this sort of demand? But our drama doesn't end here. Strangely enough, the ending is down-beat, and unhappy. One more payment is to come—the Eady money.

In order to encourage British production still further, the British Film Production Fund—known as Eady after its originator—was formed on Government order. The

monies of the fund are raised through a levy on the box-office earnings of every film—short or feature, foreign or British—which plays in any fiscal year. The British films—short and feature—released in that year then receive a share of the fund in proportion to the numbers released. Thus a considerable amount of extra revenue can be earned by British films through the Eady money.

This money was to be paid to the producer direct, through the film's returns, as an incentive to production. This does not happen in practice—which should be understandable by now. With the distributor's direct participation in production, Eady money is now reckoned as part of the film's box-office takings and shared out as explained earlier. Thus one more avenue through which independent production could gain a measure of true independence—i.e. financial security—has been closed.

What has been described so far is standard industry procedure. Obviously there are variants and occasional attempts at enterprise—Woodfall for example—but for most independent production, the formulae are common business practice. Studio production is different in some respects and even worse.

So what? Why complain? That's business the world over. Get with it or get out? But is it business? Even on the industry's terms it is no longer working. If the current state of Britain's film production can be taken as a guide then new thinking is needed urgently. If the continuous drain upon the N.F.F.C. is any indication—then the practices and the practitioners are inefficient. Last year the Corporation reported another monster loss on loans—apart from the initial loss it incurred in saving the industry some years ago.

If only one in five films really make a working profit—the current industry quotation—then perhaps the formula only works a fifth of the time—a system no self-respecting mathematician would justify. Yet new ideas and themes and even formulae are frozen out! What other industry denies the import-

ance of experimentation and prototypes so much as our film industry? Or retreats so quickly from its first set-backs when tackling new fields? In America, a certain amount of enterprise is tolerated to allow new talents to grow—e.g. the recent T.V. Hollywood. What have we done? What has anyone done?

What can be done? Not much. And it's no use kidding ourselves. An industry as asleep as ours will need more than a catastrophe to wake it. So will the society of which it is a classic example. Yet some immediate action could bring results—although we must not forget that in any creative endeavour a margin of failure must be accepted. Original talent begins a tradition or enlarges one, honest craftsmen and the hacks support it.

30 So the first step is the encouragement of new talent, through a national scheme of prize money for the annual twenty best short films to be decided by an independent panel. The monies should be skimmed from the Eady Fund and the prizes enough to pay for a major proportion of the costs of the winning films. Some really small-scale features should be encouraged in a similar manner. Budgets would be limited and release guaranteed—perhaps by Government order (the N.F.F.C. has such powers within its charter).

This is very similar to the scheme being worked in France today. It means of course, co-operation by all sides of the industry. There should be little danger here of exploitation, as the A.C.T.T. must know its black sheep pretty well by now.

Next the N.F.F.C. must play a far more *vitalising* role than its present one of quiet acquiescence. Perhaps producers who have lost money consistently with formula product should be asked to wait a year before getting new monies. And perhaps works of genuine enterprise given concrete (i.e. cash) encouragement—this means, of course, some choice and attitude by the Corporation; some action on behalf of the culture of our country.

Enterprising film-makers will have to learn about the industry of which

they are a part (one of the objects of this article). Instead of waiting for the producers we haven't got, they must learn to sully their hands in the business side of film production, or find means of operating on its peripheries, or again, find outside sources of finance—a number of which remain untapped, or at least untried. In other words, get stuck in, somehow.

The Union's own film company, after years of unadulterated trash, encouraged all of us with *The Man Upstairs*. Why not more from what is a progressive union in many other respects? Budgets need drastic pruning—particularly with executive overheads. N.F.F.C. again? Cost must no longer be the main criterion of quality—at least by our industry which has illustrated its failure to crash the world market in any major fashion.

Somehow or other the home market must support its films—perhaps through a more stringent quota appraisal and perhaps by a completely fresh appraisal of the part played by exhibition in the industry—which gives nothing but four walls and a roof, yet takes considerable profits.

Treat the stories of closing cinemas with caution. Inefficiency is as much to blame as T.V. and bad films or different social habits. Yet, the industry is undergoing change—if only decomposition. Its place in society has shifted and the new situation is demanding new methods.

Who will make the first move? The union? a progressive distributor? a consortium of art-house operators? one of the smaller circuits? a producer or one of the other powerful creative elements within the industry, who pay lip service to progressive enterprise and churn out the same old failures? Perhaps the N.F.F.C.? Or perhaps nobody except the odd individual or team making the odd individual attempt. Perhaps that's all we deserve.

PERHAPS

BOOKS

KINO by JAY LEYDA

(Allen & Unwin — 42/-)

Anyone who has at some time attempted to place the work of a Soviet director in its historical perspective will have cursed the absence of a book like "Kino". Mr Leyda describes his work as a subjective history, meaning by this that to select what are the main lines of development and what are subsidiary involves a personal critical judgement which we should not attempt to disguise as abstract omniscience and from which we have no right to shrink. The consequence of his approach is a book which combines great value as a work of factual reference with many of the best qualities of a thriller. It is a story written with humour and affection by a man who was himself present to witness some crucial twists of the plot.

Throughout the book the films discussed are seen against the background of the changing structure of the Soviet industry, and this in turn is related to political circumstances of the time. Some of Mr. Leyda's political judgements are a little surprising. The rift between Stalin and Trotsky, for example, is attributed to the latter's egoism and his consequent failure to recognize the broader aims of the Party: so that Stalin's subsequent repressive actions appear not as a natural development of his attitude and policy, but as the result of a sudden collapse into megalomania.

A more important weakness in the book is the absence of any detailed examination of the doctrine of Socialist Realism—the pressures which gave rise to it, the form of its exposition, and the influence it had upon the style and quality of films. (The name of Zhdanov appears only once in the index.) But perhaps Mr. Leyda has in effect answered this criticism in those passages where he blames the de-

cline in Soviet films in the '30s and '50s purely upon the increasing efficiency of the industry. Thus at the close of the book he says:—

"Though it is a discouraging notion to those workers and officials who give their lives to improving the physical circumstances of any film industry, it seems clear that the larger the 'plant', the more convenient the equipment, the more organized the distribution apparatus—the greater the danger of the film growing less individual, more uniform, and less worth everyone's effort. Throughout Soviet film history, the films were finest when they had the individuality that any industrial administration, by its nature and purpose, was bound to distrust."

The suggestion that the mere machinery of industrial production will lead to poor films—regardless of the social or economic structure within which it operates—is possibly the most controversial theme in this book. It is one which deserves to be discussed at length.

D. V.

"SCREEN EDUCATION"

"For anyone interested in education..."? No: that is a foolish way to begin a review. Everyone should be interested in education. The children of today will be the layabouts, the Beatniks or the Battle of Britain pilots of tomorrow; and what they become will depend not only upon the pressure of circumstances but also, partly, upon the attitude we adopt towards them now. We are all educators, if only by example.

Those of us who think that films occupy a particularly important place in life have a special responsibility to consider their effects as a formative influence upon the young, and to be in touch with current thinking on the ways in

which the critical awareness of children may be stimulated, and the medium harnessed to their fuller development as adults.

Such considerations led, some ten years ago, to the formation of the Society of Film Teachers—a group composed mainly of practising educationists who banded together to pool their ideas and experiences in seeking to give film its rightful place in education, to promote whatever methods seemed of most practical use, and to agitate for due recognition of their aims from the relevant authorities. A duplicated journal, "Film Teacher", became a regular forum for discussion of such topics, and offered a wide selection of articles ranging from theoretical discussion to practical accounts of work done.

Last year the Society, which had inevitably become concerned with problems of the influence of television—so similar to that of film—was reconstituted the "Society for Education in Film and Television"; and a new journal, "Screen Education", was launched to take over the functions of "Film Teacher". This journal is about the size of "Definition", and costs one shilling. It has about it that air of confidence which comes from knowing what the problems are, and being eager to tackle them. Above all, its quality perhaps lies in the fact that it is a magazine pursuing a specific aim—devoted to doing something in particular—and has therefore something of the excitement of a campaign communique as well as of an academic publication. It can be obtained under a publications subscription of 10/- per year from:

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Note

The Editorial Board would like to apologise, especially to subscribers, for the delay in bringing out the second issue of *Definition*. We had intended also to make some comment drawing attention to changes in format and layout; but these changes are so obvious that no mention seems necessary, except perhaps to point out that this is in fact the same magazine as appeared under this title last February.

Acknowledgment

Bryanston for the cover still from *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, Films of Poland for the stills from *Crosseyed Luck* and *Eroica* on pages 5 and 7, Gala Films for the still from *Hiroshima Mon Amour* on page 13, Contemporary Films for the still from *Come Back Africa* on page 15, S.F. Distributors for a still from *The Girl Rosemarie 'X'* on page 16 and Keith Waller, cameraman, for the frame enlargements from his test films for *Pools* on page 21.

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